

Friday, November 6, 2015
BVPAGE Meeting Minutes



Board members present: Tracy Elford, Lisa Johnston, Delora Crawford, Christy Kelley, Patty Logan, Cathryn Linney, Heidi Mann

BV School District guests: Mark Schmidt
Parent Attendees: 14

1. Welcome and Updates- Tracy Elford
 - a. There were 4 questions from the October meeting that were emailed or left for Kristin Asquith. The answers appear at the end of the meeting minutes.
 - b. With the proceeds from last summer's robotics camps, we have contracted our 2 robotics teachers to create mini-challenges for a robotics curriculum designed for Blue Valley elementary and middle schools. Patty Logan read a few examples of the challenges, showed the Lego Pirate kit that will be used, and a laminated grid that will be part of the set. It is our hope to have all the sets put together for distribution in December. 25 of the 29 schools to whom the curriculum was offered opted to accept the BVPAGE curriculum and Lego kits.
 - c. Tracy told the group that the topic for the December meeting will be High School Opportunities. BVPAGE receives many questions every year about gifted students and high school enrollment, curriculum, tracks, and how to fit everything in. Our speakers will be a guidance counselor from Blue Valley Southwest and a gifted teacher from Blue Valley High School.

The October meeting topics of Gifted Education Curriculum and IEP's generated a great deal of conversation, questions, feedback, and ideas. The group did not get to the interactive portion of the meeting where parents got to talk about IEP goals – ideas, successes, pitfalls, and suggestions.

The following is a list of specific IEP goals or examples parents gave. Below that are other topics of interest and conversation from the meeting.

Individual Education Plan Goals

1. IEP goals should tap into kid's curiosity and passions.
2. Challenge kids to come up with ideas, make connections, use observations to come up with goals and projects.
3. Kids learn by trial and error – one goal was for student to fail and have to figure out how to recover. Worked with science teacher on electrical circuit assignment.

4. Academic and tangible goals are easy to create and measure. Social and emotional goals can be part of an IEP but have to have a 'measurable' criteria for success or failure.
 - a. One student had a social goal of visiting 3 extracurricular groups per quarter. The student, who found social interactions challenging, did not have to join any group, just visit 3 of them.
 - b. One parent said her child has problems looking adults in the eye when speaking. This can be made a goal by number of times talking (with eye contact) to teachers or setting goal to interview a teacher(s).
 - c. Other social/emotional goals: how to respond to others when they talk to student, have student write a script with 5 ways to respond when someone says "Hello" or "How are you?" The goal then becomes practicing relationships.
5. IEP goal requirements need to relate back to the 5 areas of gifted curriculum and be measurable.
6. Goals are often written specifically in general terms to reflect interests that may come up during the year
7. Perfectionism – can make an IEP goal to address this, one student had to read book on perfectionism and write about 5 exhibited traits
8. Examples of specific goals:
 - a. Writing/composing piano music
 - b. Wrote a murder mystery: script, props, parts, in a set/case
 - c. Art projects (painting specifically) with help from art teacher
 - d. Electric circuit building assignment (with help from science teacher): circuit looked great on paper but when tried to hook wires to light bulb and fan, didn't work. Took 30 failures to get it to work
 - e. Photography project (with help from art teacher)
 - f. Student with a passion for writing was goaled to create an online school newspaper where she acted as editor. The other students in gifted class were asked to be the reporters. Principal liked it so much she funded paper printing of newspaper.
 - g. Social/Emotional goal to visit 3 extracurricular clubs per quarter
 - h. Set number of times to talk to another adult or interview a teacher
 - i. Student had to read book on perfectionism and write about 5 traits, hopefully to recognize traits in herself
 - j. Goal to write a book or short story and send it to a contest or publisher

Questions and Answers:

1. Ask student if they like group or individual projects. Group projects are not part of an IEP goal (hence the individual part), but a gifted teacher can come up with group projects during class. Group projects need buy in from teacher and other students.
2. Gifted class for students can be a place to strengthen their strengths or to work on their weaknesses

3. Parent recommended article from www.onlinecollege.org called “50 People who Failed First” Link: <http://www.onlinecollege.org/2010/02/16/50-famously-successful-people-who-failed-at-first/>
4. Parent recommended book from gifted class “When Good Enough Is Not Good Enough”
5. Grades and getting a “B” – why are grades a trauma to some and a success to others? A struggling student would be proud of a “B” but a perfectionist student may see a “B” as a traumatic event. Trauma is individual.
6. Resilience and Perfectionism are often tied together in gifted students.
 - a. Blue Valley teachers get quite a bit of training on both topics
 - b. It is better for students to learn resiliency at a younger age rather than an older age
 - c. As they get older, failure has more consequences so work on resiliency and consequences when stakes are not so high
7. The district’s tag line of “Education Beyond Expectations” – good general idea but are gifted-perfectionist students setting expectations so high they can never achieve them?
8. Parents talked about ‘failure’ and activities kids could do that were not school based and grade based. Following suggestions were made:
 - a. Sports
 - b. Golf – have to swing a lot before you get a good hit, one bad hole doesn’t mean the next one will be bad, one good hole doesn’t mean the next one will be good
 - c. Tae Kwon Do – lots of focus needed, needs “Stick with it” to continue to next level, practice is needed
 - d. Music – you have to practice piano to see a difference in playing
 - e. Video Games – (brilliant observation most of our kids can relate to!) – they don’t reach level 400 the first time they play, they have to repeat things, they have to find what works, they have to not do the thing that will get the game to stop or their player to return to the beginning
 - f. Flight simulator software – crashing the airplane is a visual and audible failure that proves they need to do something differently next time
9. Parenting gifted kids – gifted parenting advice is often just parent advice: you have to figure out what works for each kid, what do they respond to, what is important to them, some need to be pushed, and some need to be reined in
10. Parents may need to point out to the child when they are being resilient or when they had to try more than once; for example, kids may not think of video games as something they had to work hard at. Kids may not make the connection between failures and practice resulting in improvement at a video game, for example, and having to try more than once on school work or other things that need work.
11. It is NEVER too late to develop resiliency, sometime kids need to try things on their own to figure out their best response or a different response from last time
12. Parent book recommendation “How to Raise An Adult” by Julie Lythcott-Haims

13. Parent book recommendation "Mind Set" by Carol Dweck
14. Gifted kids need to experience the consequences of their actions or lack of action. The consequences need to be *their* consequences. Teachers appreciate parents who back them up whether it be on grades earned, not turning in homework, expectations, etc.
15. Gifted kids and lack of organization – one parent took kids to store and let them pick out their own organization supplies (one big binder, multiple folders, spiral notebook for assignments, etc.) If kids have a say in how they organize they may have more emotional investment in making it work.
16. When kids are old enough to be responsible, let them check on their own for grades and missing assignments. That doesn't mean parent doesn't ever check!!
17. Middle school is a good time for the start of independence. One parent told teachers at middle school conference that parents were backing out of checking if assignments turned in or not, so any missing work was responsibility of student's.
18. One parent commented that parents can set IEP goals too low and they defer to gifted teacher and support goals as set by the teacher.
19. Let teachers know it is okay if student gets a bad grade – they earn a grade, they are not given a grade. But we ask teachers not to tell them (or us) that "all is good" if student isn't putting in effort. Can ask teacher to hold student to a higher standard.
20. Communication with teachers is important! Circumstances can affect what happens at school, at home, and with expectations.
21. Our kids are smart. They know how work the system, how to play the angles, and step into loopholes.
22. One teacher worked a 'deal' with student that if he kept test grades at X% then he did not have to do specific homework assignments. Teachers have great ideas and can be a solution to everyday problems and frustrations.

A parent emailed Tracy with a request for the group – her 3rd grade daughter has just been identified and was the only gifted student in her class. What concrete suggestions could the group give for the daughter to do during gen ed classes to keep her attention and engaged?

1. Request in depth packets from the teacher (gifted teacher may be able to help with procuring these)
2. Make sure is in highest level reading series books
3. Can student use computer in class to research some topic as class and present findings to class
4. Is there an additional or different textbook student can read, do assignments from?
5. Can student research, prepare, and present a powerpoint on class topic?
6. Ask gifted teacher for differentiated work on multiple subjects (science, math, and social studies)
7. Have parent provide student with logic books & puzzles to work on when class work is completed
8. Have a box of additional materials available in class that gifted students can choose from when class work is completed: Sudoku books, minute mysteries, crosswords, word finds, etc.

9. Have student earn time for computer lab, for ipod, for phone, or whatever they want to earn time for

Tracy Elford wrapped up the meeting with the information that at the present time, the Blue Valley School district is the only district in Kansas with an active gifted parent group. Shawnee Mission is struggling and Olathe is in the process of trying to start their parent group. BVPAGE has been assisting and mentoring both groups. Tracy asked the parents to remember that when they leave the room they are ambassadors for gifted education, gifted students, and parents of gifted students.

Questions from October Submitted after the Meeting, Answers from Kristin Asquith; Coordinator of Gifted Services for Blue Valley

How can teachers put comments in IEP progress reports?

- I will review with teachers the process for adding comments to IEP progress reports. Parents can always email the teacher for additional information about progress, too.

How can I get a copy of IEP documents before the meeting (so I don't have to read them sitting in the room)?

- Teachers are asked to provide a draft copy of the IEP to parents about a week prior to the meeting. If one isn't sent in that timeframe, parents can request that the teacher provide them with a draft copy prior to the meeting. If there are any concerns about this, parents can contact Kristin Asquith.

What is the best way to tell a gifted teacher that I think a 'class goal' isn't worth my child's time? I don't want to do it in front of my child at the meeting? (referring to college search goals every year in middle school)

- Any questions about curriculum activities the students are engaged in can first be shared with the teacher. The gifted education curriculum doesn't require group goals, but if the goal is one from the IEP, parents can provide input and ideas for these prior to or during the meeting to review the draft IEP document. Give the teacher a call to start the conversation.

My child has done the same gifted class topics/study every year in elementary school. How can I ask that they do something different?

- Contact the teacher and share your concern that the student has repeated the same topic each year. We want to expose students to a variety of topics and activities, so they can identify their interests and explore things they may not have considered previously.

Next meeting: Friday December 4, 2015

Topic: High School Opportunities

Come and hear from a high school counselor and a high school gifted teacher about specifics for gifted students. Find out about requirements, recommended tracks for gifted students, and hear from parents about how they fit in programs (ex: debate and music), how many honors classes a students should take, and find out about gifted class, services, and teachers in high school. If your child is in

elementary school – find out what you need to prepare down the road, if your child is in middle school
– find out about registration before your child hears the message for ‘average’ students, if your child is
already in high school – share how it worked for you (good or bad).